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[845] supposed to be hollow inside. I knew a Jaunde man who refused to eat anything when two pots were set next to each other on his hearth fire. He was afraid this would cause his wife to have twins (mvé, "pot," and myŏ, "vagina").

262 In view of the many hairsplitting distinctions among the food taboos, it is hardly surprising that they are frequently violated by accident. They are also transgressed knowingly, however, if the desire for meat is greater than the fear of the evil consequences of its enjoyment. In these cases, it is again medicines (biăn ekĭ) which help and which are often even taken beforehand or simultaneously by way of prophylaxis. It is probably scarcely necessary [177] for me to mention that food taboos are the first to be relinquished under the influence of a foreign civilization, not all at once, but nonetheless gradually and totally. The religious taboos are clung to most tenaciously of all. Nor need I emphasize that the Pangwe, even at the age of 20, still like to count themselves among the boys if there is a delectable piece of meat to be had. Accordingly, I saw my "boys," who were from ten to 20 years old, consuming without pangs of conscience the parasite kites I had shot. /194/

Section 14

Soothsaying and Science

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1. Soothsaying. Extent and area of practice. -- The soothsayer's tool. -- Master and pupil. -- Fee. -- Distrust of soothsayers. -- Soothsaying in times of war.
2. Meteorology. Rain, lightning, and thunder. -- Appearance and effect of lightning. -- Rain medicines at the time of drying ngon, at cult festivals, at the time of harvest, and on journeys; their evaluation. -- Rainbows: their origin, tale concerning their origin. -- Storms: their origin, counter-medicines.
3. Astronomy. General observations. -- View of the earth as a heavenly body. -- The vault of heaven:

847 oyŏ', fruit chopped up, and Cognauxia, Cucurbitacea
278 (mbŏmyē I), roots ground, both boiled together, strained, and after cooling, used as an enema; 5) Maesopsis tessmannii Engl. Rhamnaceae (nkĭngĭ' I), bark boiled, strained, and used cold as an enema. In this last case, its inclusion among abortives was probably determined by the fact that the wood of the tree is stronger in the upper part of the trunk, while below it is weaker.

844 When the confinement is near, the woman usually goes to her parents if her native village is not too far away and if conditions permit her to do so. /275/ Otherwise, she stays at home as do all older women who have borne three or four children.

Before the confinement the woman stays quietly in the house from two to three days, more rarely four days. Cases are not infrequent, however, when the birth pangs take the woman by surprise during her work in the fields, and she has to bring the child into the world without help, although when this happens she will try to attract the attention of passers-by or women in the vicinity by screaming and shouting, and the latter will assist her and take her and the child into the village.

It is strictly prohibited for male relatives or strange men to witness the birth (osŏn, "shame"; some even said nsŏ'm, "crime"). Even the woman's own husband is present (osŏn applies to him also) only when there are no female helpers, on which occasion he must take their place. This is, however, a rare and exceptional case; ordinarily there are helpful and experienced women aplenty, who flock to the woman in childbed to encourage her and to assist at the birth by clasping her body from behind and thus supporting it.

Without medicine, of course, a birth cannot take place. The [278] sap of Cephalonema polyandrum K. Sch., Cucurbitaceae (ejăzŭ'm), and Fleurya aestuans (L.) Gandich, Urticaceae (ngŭkŭ'n IV), is allowed to trickle into the vagina. The sap is slippery, "smooth," and will thus effect a smooth birth.

The actual birth takes place without any kind of assistance if the child has what the Pangwe also regard as the normal head 845 position. In case of the feet-first position or other irregularities, the child is forcibly pulled out and is then -- so it was said -- always dead. Difficult births seem to be quite rare since my various

845 informants had never heard of such a thing. Similarly, it very rarely happens that women die immediately after delivery from the consequences (bleeding, a weak heart) -- death by puerperal [164] fever, on the other hand, is more frequent. In cases of such a death, the Pangwe speak of a kiɛ̃'ɛ̃, which is as much as to say that a strange woman brought about the death through sorcery.

844 Once the child (in the case of a normal birth) has passed out of the birth canal, it is received by one of the women assisting and the umbilical cord (ngŏ'b IV, not to be confused with ngób IV, "caul, sheath") is squeezed off with a raffia splinter at a distance of from eight to ten centimeters from the little one's body. The rest of the umbilical cord drops off of its own accord after five to six days and is then casually thrown away; by then the navel (dŏb, plural mŏb) is healed. In other cases, the umbilical cord is cut off one centimeter from the belly, thereby causing an umbilical rupture (edŏdŏb = navel par excellence) which is regarded as particularly beautiful. Now the child is washed and placed on a layer of leaves on the bed next to the mother. /276/

The afterbirth (akŏ'nan) soon follows of its own accord. It is usually placed in a leaf bundle and hidden in the refuse pile or buried in a pit in the plantain grove behind the house. If this precautionary measure is not observed, the child will die or the mother will no longer be able to bear children.

[278] Finally a medicine is made for the mother: the herb Ocimum gratissimum L. (asŏ'b) is dipped in hot water and pressed on the genitals.

851 During the delivery, the husband waits in the meeting house. Once the child is born, he is told the news by one of the women assisting. Formerly, shots were fired as an expression of joy, but now the custom is no longer practiced, especially in the north, for lack of powder.

853 On the very first day, the mother gives her breast to the child. If no milk flows, it is assumed that the mother has had lovers who are still in her "belly" and exercise an impeding influence. Therefore, out with them! Argument is of no avail; one after another, all the lovers must be named before those present, in 000 other words, the women, if the milk is to flow. On the second

and helps with its birth. It sometimes happens that the child presents only its head and that the rest has difficulty in following. One of the women present goes to ask the husband if, during the pregnancy of his wife, he has nailed anything or fastened it with vines, as it could be this that is holding the child back. In this case the husband must unnail or detach something; similarly, if he has built a hut, he must remove some bark from the wall of any hut in order to facilitate the birth of the child.

If the delivery is especially difficult, a man leads a young boy to a wild mango tree (andok), takes him by the feet, and makes him scratch the bark of the tree with a machete, while holding him with his head down. As he scratches, the boy collects pieces of bark in a plate. These pieces, taken back to the village, are used to prepare an infusion which the patient drinks. In case this remedy fails another is made: an infusion of a chopped herb (eyele nzum) is poured into the mouth of the woman in labor by a child perched on the roof of the hut; just above the woman the child has pierced a hole, into which the infusion flows through a hollow banana stalk. When neither of these two medicines has worked, there is a last one which is used in an unusual way, but which, our informants say, is always crowned with success. The invalid eats a paste made of mashed pumpkin, an herb (manden makwe), and a small snail (nson akwe), cooked with salt in leaves. It is very rare, however, that recourse must be had to any of these three medicines. During the entire period of the confinement, at which only women are allowed to be present, the husband stays outside the door of the hut.

Immediately after the delivery, the woman called mbyale takes the child and [82] cuts the cord (dol) about 10 centimeters from the abdomen with a piece of bamboo shaped in the form of a knife. The portion removed (ngoe mon) is buried under a banana tree, whose fruit is reserved strictly for men. Then the spot where the delivery took place is cleared of the leaves and washed; at the same time the child is bathed in cold water and laid on a fresh banana leaf. It must spend one night before taking the breast for the first time, and until then nothing is given it to drink.

The placenta (kum) is removed and wrapped in banana leaves in a package which is hidden in the brush. The young mother must not

761 in the etok and stays there for a certain length of time. While she is
789 in this bath, she eats a soup made of the rest of the bark gathered by the practitioner, together with a pumpkin, a piece of the heart, liver, and some blood of the sacrificial animal, all cooked in a pot. This remedy is intended to satisfy the evur and prevent it from eating the blood of the woman or of the child which she may carry in her womb in the future.

761 The death of the child may also arise from an akaga given to its mother, which predicted that one of her children would not live.

761 Finally, if there is neither evur nor akaga, this mishap is believed
784 to be caused by the violation of a prohibition or, more likely, by
837 adultery committed by the woman during her pregnancy. To make her denounce her accomplice, she is beaten until she has named him. This man must then pay to the husband an indemnity equal to half the dowry which he spent to get his wife, an indemnity which represents the price of the adultery and the price of the child's corpse. The woman is subjected from then on to the prohibition of awos until the the birth of her next child.

854 The child (mon). Until it talks, the child is called nkanele. We We have seen that after its birth it is washed in cold water and not fed until the following morning. The breast is first given it by another woman rather than by the mother, whose milk is not good at first.

At the age of eight days, the child is smeared with ba. If the cord dries up by itself without trouble, it is enough to moisten it with saliva.

845 Anomalies such as the birth of an albino or of twins are considered
[143] normal. The natives have stated that albinos are reproduced in the same family at an interval of three generations. As to twins, they are forbidden later on to take part in the ngwel. If the twins are boys,
[55] the first is called Nzugo, the second Dzima; if they are girls, they are given the names respectively of Bela and Nzua.

551 A name is not given a child until several months after birth, when one is almost certain that it will live. A child receives several names. The father chooses the first name from among his ancestors. For example, a boy will be called Osene from the name of a paternal ancestor, to this name of Osene has been added the name of his father Ekomi, and so the child is called Osene Ekomi; but he also has a sort of first name chosen by the parents, which in the present case is [84] Andzang. The complete name thus is Andzang Osene Ekomi. The mother's

844 one of the women's associations. The child is delivered on a mattress of banana leaves. The umbilical cord is cut with a special knife, perhaps the same used in circumcisions (1), and it is buried under a

1. This is not certain; since the circumciser is a man, we may question whether he would use a woman's knife.

banana tree, whose fruit will be étyi to people of the opposite sex from the child. The placenta is buried by the mother herself in a secret spot, or in her place by a woman of her own blood; afterward the mother may tell her child, as a mild way of cursing, "I know where your placenta is." The baby is immediately wrapped in a loincloth and laid beside its mother, after being shown to the father if it is a boy. The following day the baby as well as the mother is rubbed with warm oil, and it is given the breast. /92/

●845 Difficult deliveries are quite common, and the midwives' technique extremely uneven. Although some may know how to effect artificial delivery, even version, most of them are limited to massaging and to using magic, like placing an axe between the mother's legs. If the woman dies in childbirth, sorcery is suspected or a grave nsem like incest; in the old days the baby, even if born alive, would have been buried with its mother. A stillborn child also arouses great suspicion about the mother, who may have to go through an ordeal and be forced to confess an offense presumed to have caused the death of the fetus.

Some writers have claimed that baby girls were sacrificed at birth [847] as being of no value to the clan. This seems very unlikely unless the infanticide was the result of an accusation of sorcery, which could also apply to a boy. What is true is that a woman giving birth only to girls would be considered the victim of a spell or a breaking of taboo.

The birth of twins is propitious, for they are thought to be necessarily mie or mmimie, that is, free of évu (the same word mie means "confinement" or, more precisely, the "labor" of childbirth). Twins receive traditional names that vary according to clan.

846 The first coming out of the house /relevailles, "churching"/, ékulu mon, "baby's coming out," takes place three months after birth, if everything has gone well. The woman starts bathing in the

553 arrival of a stranger. Hence, a certain number of names that at first would seem totemic, because they copy the names of animals and plants, are not so at all. In general, the eldest son's name is that of one of his forebears, a grandfather or ancestor, who is thought to come to life again in him. Twins, [845] however, always receive special names of matched things, which go in twos, like Sun and Moon, Wind and Rain, Storm and Thunder, etc.

851 As soon as the child has been given a name, his father 719 takes it in his arms and carries it into his hut, where he opens the évora biéri and puts the baby down on the lid. He then takes the ancestral skulls one by one and puts them on the child's head, then places the family totem in its hand. The father with his fingernail often scrapes a bit off of the antelope horn holding the remnants of his personal totemic sacrifice, and puts some of this into the child's mouth. This, strictly speaking, is the dedication to the totem. The father then takes the baby back to its mother so that she may anoint it with oil and rub it with red wood. After the mother, or any other woman present, has attended to this, the father again takes the child and puts another bit of the totem into its mouth. A she-goat, a sheep, or at least a fowl is then offered to the family totem and to the spirits of the departed, according to sacred ritual. The remains [719] of this sacrifice, the ashes, etc., are enclosed in a small antelope horn, which is hung around the baby's neck or above his genital organs: this will be his amulet. Finally, the father gives the baby his personal totem, which will be recalled to him later on when he is old enough to understand. At that same time he will be taught what are the family, clan, and tribal totems, and the duties and obligations they impose on him. This instruction is part of the mébara. [572]

2. Adoption

597 In certain cases, a few children are adopted by a head of 727 the family when given as ransom for murder or spared in the